

COMMUNITY GUIDEBOOK

for

WYOMING

SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

COMMEMORATIONS



DECLARATION OF
IMAGINATION

Provided by the Wyoming Semiquincentennial Task Force

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Introduction

The Wyoming Semiquincentennial Task Force (WSTF) makes this Community Guidebook available to aid Wyoming communities with planning programs to observe America's 250th birthday. The Task Force encourages activities to start in 2025 and continue past July 4, 2026.

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, Governor Mark Gordon established the Wyoming Semiquincentennial Planning Task Force. This group, consisting of members from various state departments, educational institutions, tribal representatives, and industry organizations, will develop and coordinate events and activities to celebrate this milestone.

Representative Sandy Newsome, Task Force Chair, Co-Chairwomen – Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Committee

Senator Wendy Schuler, Co-Chairwomen – Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Committee

Justice Kari Gray, Wyoming Supreme Court

Megan Degenfelder, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Councilwoman Teresa His Chase, Northern Arapaho Business Council

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Cindy Brown, President – Wyoming Historical Society Executive Committee

Kevin Voyles, Wyoming Arts Council Board

Joanna Kail, Chief Executive Officer – Wyoming PBS

Shawn Reese, Executive Director – Wyoming Humanities Council

Rebecca West, Executive Director – Buffalo Bill Center of the West

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US @ 250: Wyoming's Declaration of Imagination Themes

The Wyoming Semiquincentennial Commemoration includes three themes:

Honoring our past: Commemorate Wyoming's history, places, and people.

Examining our present: Review Wyoming's role in America today.

Imagining our future: Plan for Wyoming's leadership in America's future.

Honoring Our Past: Celebrating the state's history offers an opportunity to highlight key moments, notable locations, and the contributions of diverse communities within Wyoming. This could include commemorative events, exhibitions, or storytelling projects that bring to life Wyoming's role in shaping the nation.

Examining Our Present: Reflecting on Wyoming's current place in the country could involve discussions on contemporary issues, achievements, and contributions of Wyoming's people. This theme may lend itself well to public forums, lectures, or interactive digital platforms that encourage dialogue on Wyoming's present role.

Imagining Our Future: This theme provides space to envision Wyoming's evolving identity and role. Programs might include youth engagement activities, workshops on innovation and leadership, or initiatives focused on sustainability and future-oriented policy discussions.

Honoring Our Past

Wyoming has a rich and varied history, shaped by Native American tribes, pioneers, ranchers, miners, and more. Honoring the past allows people to appreciate the events, places, and individuals who influenced Wyoming's development. It also encourages an understanding of Wyoming's contributions to national history, from the resilience of its early communities to its influence on western expansion and natural preservation efforts.

Imagining

Who: This theme helps audiences recognize the people who shaped Wyoming's history, including Indigenous nations, settlers, pioneers, miners, and ranchers, as well as notable figures who left a lasting impact. Participants can learn about these influential individuals and communities through storytelling events, genealogy workshops, and historical exhibits.

What: Honoring the past answers “what” Wyoming was, highlighting the unique aspects of life in the state during various historical periods—its industries, cultural practices, and defining historical events, from the Oregon Trail to the establishment of Yellowstone.

Why: This theme explains why certain decisions and events occurred, such as why people settled in the state or why specific policies or industries thrived in Wyoming. Examining historical motivations and challenges reveals the state's resilience and resourcefulness.

When: Knowing the chronological context of Wyoming's milestones gives audiences a clearer picture of how the state developed over time, connecting events like the expansion of the railroads, statehood, and the impact of early conservation movements.

Ideas

Historical Sites and Markers: Organize maintenance, clean-up, and tours of important landmarks to give participants a firsthand experience of Wyoming's historical sites.

Archaeological Sites: Promote and maintain existing public archaeological sites and petroglyphs.

Oral History Projects: Collect stories from local residents, including elders from Indigenous communities and families with generational ties to Wyoming. These stories can be archived digitally or turned into a book or documentary.

Cemeteries: Organize maintenance and repair of local cemeteries. Community members and organizations can assist in cemetery preservation.

Library and Museum Exhibits: Both public and school libraries should consider the establishment of special "American Revolution" and "Wyoming History" sections consisting of juvenile, general and scholarly books – or literature over the past 250 years.

Archival Projects: Digitizing and archiving local newspapers will preserve them for future generations.

History Publications: Collect and preserve photographs, historical documents, maps, and photos documenting the town or area's history.

Time Capsules: Communities and organizations could create and install time capsules.

Interactive Exhibits: Interactive museum or library exhibits featuring artifacts, historic photographs, and documents allow visitors to explore Wyoming's heritage

firsthand. Virtual or augmented reality elements can recreate historical moments or locations for a more immersive experience.

Genealogy Workshops: Offering genealogy workshops where participants can trace their Wyoming family histories brings a personal connection to history. Attendees can uncover their ancestors' stories and feel a direct link to Wyoming's past.

Historical Reenactments and Living History Days of significant events or cultural gatherings, highlighting the day-to-day life of early settlers, Indigenous customs, and Wyoming's role in the American West.

Guided Expeditions to significant landmarks and trails, such as Fort Laramie, Independence Rock, and sections of the Oregon Trail, where participants can hear stories about these places from historical and Indigenous perspectives.

Storytelling Events are held at sacred or historical sites, like Devils Tower or Medicine Wheel, where Indigenous leaders share cultural narratives, myths, and history of the land. Storytelling circles create an intimate setting where people can connect with the land's spiritual significance and historical memory, fostering respect and understanding of Indigenous cultures.

Examining Our Present

Reflecting on Wyoming's current identity offers a way to examine the values, achievements, challenges and opportunities that define the state today. It also provides a chance to discuss how Wyoming's economy, environment, and culture interact with broader national and global issues. By taking stock of the present, Wyomingites can recognize areas for growth and celebrate modern successes.

Imagining

Who: This theme highlights the people who make up Wyoming today, from diverse communities and Indigenous populations to artists, ranchers, energy workers, educators, and entrepreneurs. Programming that features contemporary voices, like community panels or industry spotlights, allows audiences to see who Wyoming is now.

What: It answers what Wyoming is currently known for, including its energy production, natural beauty, creativity, cultural diversity, and future opportunities. Topics like stewardship, economic development, and education are central to understanding Wyoming's identity.

Why: Examining the present helps audiences understand why Wyoming occupies its particular position today—why certain industries dominate, policies exist, and why some issues are priorities.

When: This theme also speaks to present urgency—what is happening right now that demands attention? Events like forums and documentaries address questions of timeliness, highlighting current topics shaping Wyoming's present and near future.

Ideas

Community Art Projects: Commission local artists to create murals or installations representing Wyoming’s contemporary culture and diversity. These can serve as visual reminders of Wyoming’s evolving identity and as conversation starters about the state’s present-day values and community issues.

State of the State Series: Organize a series of talks by local leaders and influencers who can address topics such as healthcare, technology, the economy, and arts and culture, providing a snapshot of Wyoming’s contributions in these areas.

Community Forums and Panels: Forums on current issues, such as economic development, education, and Indigenous affairs, allow residents to hear from experts and engage in discussion. These panels create a space for community input and reflection on Wyoming’s current place within the nation and bring together various voices to inspire new ideas and partnerships.

Documentary Screenings and Discussions: Screening documentaries or short films highlighting modern Wyoming—such as its industries, conservation efforts, or cultural diversity—followed by Q&A sessions with filmmakers or panel discussions, enabling audiences to explore current issues in an engaging and visual format.

Local Business and Industry Spotlights: Featuring stories or tours from key Wyoming industries—such as energy, tourism, agriculture, and tech—offers insight into what drives the state’s economy. Programming could include business fairs, open house events, or industry Q&A panels.

Interactive Art Installations: Community-driven installations can display contemporary Wyoming’s diversity and values. For example, a wall where people add images, objects, or notes about “What Wyoming Means to Me” creates a shared space for reflection on today’s Wyoming.

Public Data Visualization: Create interactive data visualizations about topics like Wyoming's economy, population trends, or natural resource data. Audiences can see where Wyoming stands on pressing issues through easily understandable charts and graphs, and how its landscape is evolving.

Community Forums in Rural Areas or Agricultural Lands to discuss modern land use, farming, and ranching practices, followed by a meal featuring local produce. Hosting these discussions outdoors in agricultural spaces emphasizes the realities and importance of land-based industries in Wyoming. These events encourage conversations on balancing economic needs with conservation, helping audiences appreciate land-dependent livelihoods.

Guided Hikes and "Eco-tours" that highlight Wyoming's natural biodiversity, led by conservationists who discuss current environmental challenges, invasive species, and water management. Participants experience Wyoming's environment firsthand and learn how today's ecological challenges affect the state's landscapes. These experiences create a connection to Wyoming's landscape and offer inspiration for local conservation efforts.

Community or Neighborhood Potlucks allow people to come together for family, food, and fun.

Imagining Our Future

This theme encourages a forward-looking perspective, inspiring Wyomingites to consider how the state can continue to evolve and contribute to the nation’s future. By focusing on education, youth engagement, and innovation, Wyoming can equip its residents, particularly the younger generation, with tools to lead in making Wyoming a better place.

Imagining

Who: This theme helps audiences think about future Wyomingites—who they could be, who today’s youth might become, and what types of leaders and innovators will guide Wyoming’s future. Programs like youth leadership camps and visioning sessions encourage today’s residents to consider their future.

What: Imagining the future clarifies what Wyoming aspires to be in the coming decades. It encourages audiences to articulate what industries, policies, and communities they hope to see in Wyoming’s future. Discussions around sustainability, economic diversity, and technological advancement give audiences a vision of what Wyoming could become.

Why: This theme explores the motivations and values driving Wyoming toward particular futures—why the state prioritizes specific innovations, conservation goals, or economic developments. Understanding these “whys” gives insight into the collective aspirations and strategic choices the state is making today for tomorrow’s benefit.

When: Imagining the future underscores timelines for change—when Wyoming might adopt new policies, see the effects of current initiatives, or realize visions of leadership, innovation, or natural resource stewardship. It helps audiences recognize the steps needed to achieve long-term goals and the importance of planning.

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Ideas

Youth Leadership Programs: Establish mentorship programs or leadership camps focusing on civic engagement, entrepreneurship, and conservation. These can help develop Wyoming's next generation of leaders who are prepared to address future challenges.

Innovation & Sustainability Workshops: Host workshops on energy, agriculture technology, or sustainable tourism to discuss how Wyoming can lead in balancing economic growth with conservation.

Visionary Art and Writing Contests: Invite residents, particularly students, to create artwork, stories, or essays about their visions for Wyoming's future. This allows individuals to express their hopes for the state, fostering a sense of optimism and ownership over its future direction.

Innovation Highlights: Organizing events highlighting advances in Wyoming's industries, such as energy, agriculture, and conservation technology, can encourage a forward-thinking mindset. Innovation highlights, either in person or virtual, can feature startups, researchers, and students presenting their ideas for Wyoming's future.

Community Visioning Sessions: Hosting open forums or community visioning workshops where residents can brainstorm ideas and solutions for the future provides a platform to express hopes, concerns, and ideas for Wyoming's progress. These sessions can lead to action plans or public art installations inspired by community input.

Sustainability and Conservation Programs: Workshops or initiatives focused on sustainability, such as wildlife conservation, energy, or eco-tourism, help audiences think about Wyoming's environmental legacy and the role it can play in addressing global issues. These programs might include nature walks, conservation projects, or guest lectures.

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Youth Visionary Programs: Host youth-focused activities like a “Future Leaders Summit” or youth innovation challenge, encouraging students to brainstorm ideas for Wyoming’s future. Offer platforms for them to share their visions, giving older generations insight into youth perspectives and priorities.

Workshops on Future-Proof Skills: Hold workshops on technology, sustainable practices, and leadership, allowing people to consider the skills Wyomingites will need to shape a forward-looking state. For instance, sessions on energy or tech development provide concrete examples of future possibilities.

Design Competitions for Future Wyoming: Invite residents to design Wyoming’s “future” in sectors like architecture, energy and environmental policy, or technology. This could culminate in an exhibition, showing how residents envision the state in 50 years and sparking community-wide conversations.

Conservation Camps where youth participate in activities like tree planting, water conservation projects, and discussions on sustainable farming and energy. This gives Wyoming’s youth hands-on experience with conservation, encouraging them to become advocates for Wyoming’s landscapes. Learning these skills outdoors strengthens their connection to the land, helping them understand what it means to be future caretakers of Wyoming’s open spaces.

Outdoor Leadership and Innovation Festivals. By combining innovation with Wyoming’s natural beauty, this event encourages forward-thinking while rooted in Wyoming’s unique landscapes. It inspires participants to envision a future where Wyoming leads in sustainable and land-respecting practices, making it memorable and motivational.

Additional Resources

Archeology

- Wyoming State Archaeologist (<https://wyospcr.wyo.gov/index.php/our-programs/office-of-the-wyoming-state-archaeologist>)
- Wyoming Archaeological Society (www.wyomingarchaeology.org)

Art

- Creative West (<https://wearecreativewest.org/>)
- National Endowment for the Arts (<https://www.arts.gov>)
- Wyoming Arts Alliance (<https://wyomingarts.org/>)
- Wyoming Arts Council (<https://wyoarts.state.wy.us/>)

Archives

- Wyoming State Archives (<https://wyoarchives.wyo.gov/>) and Roving Archivist (<https://rovingarchivist.wyo.gov/home>)
- University of Wyoming, American Heritage Center (<https://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/index.html>)

Civics

- Civics Education Center (<https://edu.wyoming.gov/educators/civics-ed-center/>)
- Malcolm Wallop Civic Engagement Program (<https://www.uwyo.edu/wallop/index.html>)
- Wyoming We the People (<https://www.facebook.com/p/Wyoming-We-the-People-100064596523463/>)

Historic Preservation

- Alliance for Historic Wyoming (<https://historicwyoming.org/>)
- Community Preservation Program, State Historic Preservation Office

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(<https://wyoshpo.wyo.gov/index.php/programs/community-preservation-program-clg/20-frontpage/468-clg-general-information>)

- Mainstreet Wyoming/Wyoming Business Council
(<https://wyomingbusiness.org/communities/community-services/mainstreet/>)

History

- Buffalo Bill Center of the West (<https://centerofthewest.org/>)
- County and Local Historical Society Chapters
(<https://wyshs.org/about/chapters>)
- Wyoming Encyclopedia (<https://www.wyohistory.org/>)
- Wyoming Historical Society (<https://wyshs.org/>)
- Wyoming History Day (<https://www.wyominghistoryday.org/>)

Libraries

- County and Branch Libraries
(<https://library.wyo.gov/community/directory/single-category/public-branch/>)
- Wyoming State Library (<https://library.wyo.gov/>)

Indigenous Culture

- Eastern Shoshone Tribal Historic Preservation Office (<http://esthpo.com/>)
- Northern Arapaho Tribal Historic Preservation Office
(<https://www.northernarapaho.com/>)
- Wyoming Humanities (<https://thinkwy.org/>)

Outdoor Recreation

- Regional Outdoor Recreation Collaboratives
(<https://wyooutdoorrecreation.wyo.gov/index.php/outdoor-recreation-collaboratives/collaboratives>)
- Wyoming Outdoor Recreation (<https://wyooutdoorrecreation.wyo.gov/>)
- Wyoming Trails Program (<https://wyoparks.wyo.gov/index.php/home-trails>)



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For more programming ideas and program checklists, visit the American Association for State and Local History at [AASLH.org/programs/250th](https://www.aaslh.org/programs/250th).

